

Chapter-3

ACTIVITY METHOD

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INTRODUCTION

The primary obligation of the teaching profession is to guide children, youth and adults in the pursuit of knowledge and skills to prepare them in the ways of democracy and to help them to become happy, useful, self-supporting citizens. For obtaining these goals teachers have to use different teaching methods and teaching techniques some of the methods are teacher centered such as lecture method, bookish method while others are student centered, i.e. problem solving, discussion or activity methods. The main focus of the student centered methods is to make the teaching learning process more effective, interactive, communicative and attractive. It is said that the best gift we can give to each succeeding generation is effective education. This can only be possible if the existing practices regarding different components of education are renovated from time to time in the light of new developments and changing requirements. Particularly teacher's responsibility becomes more significant as an implementer. So teacher has to practice dynamic methods and techniques of teaching, as to give "effective education" to the succeeding generation. For this purpose different experts or educationists suggest that learning is more effective when a student is actively engaged in the learning process rather than attempting to receive knowledge. Regarding this most of the methods rely on some form of guided discovery where the teacher avoids most direct instruction and attempts to lead the student through questions and activities to discover, discuss, appreciate and verbalize the new knowledge. So the purpose of this unit is utilitarian, which answers the following questions. How activity method revolves around the developmental approach of student-centered methods. What are the different kinds of projects in the context of activity methods? And what are the advantages and limitations of activity method?

OBJECTIVES

While focusing above questions following are objectives of this unit:

1. To describe the nature, meaning and need of activity method.
2. To examine the different kinds of activities and their utility in the learning of students.
3. To explore the advantages of activity method with the contrast of traditional method.
4. To enlist the limitations of activity method which oppose to frequent use of this method in teaching learning process.

1. NATURE MEANING AND NEED OF ACTIVITY METHOD

It is said that children learn best when they are allowed to construct a personal understanding based on experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences.

According to Confucius:

- What I hear, I forget
- What I see, I remember
- What I do, I know

This saying advocates the activity based learning of the students. Through which schools have to reshape as activity schools which emphasize the creative aspect of experience. Now a days it is considered that directed activities focus on reality of learning. For this purpose all available resources are being used for making the teaching effective. Activities are meant to provide varied experience to the student to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes. Through these activities, students are prepared to know well, to do well and to behave well. Overall this method allows the student working individually or in small groups and develop real-life problem, simply in this method student' work independently and with the division of tasks clearly defined.

What is Activity Method?

Before explaining the activity method, it seems better to answer this question, what is an activity? Anything which is carried out with a purpose in a social environment involving physical and mental action. Such activities help in the establishment of stimulating environment for creative expression.

Types of Activities:

Activities can be of three types:

1. Exploratory – Knowledge getting
2. Constructive – Experience getting
3. Expressional – Presentation

Activities will vary according to the age group of the students. At elementary level of education pupils may involve in different activities such as listening observing, planning, collecting, talking, singing, dramatizing, experimenting and constructing. The variety of activities grows as children progress in elementary programme. This may include, painting, drawing, designing, wood carving, writing, composing, interviewing, acting, reading, map-making and graph making, field trips, gardening and camping. It is not always necessary that activity should only be motor or manipulative. It can also be mental. Knowledge-getting activities occupy a prominent place.

a) Knowledge – Getting Activities

- (i) Here a group of pupils may be asked to make a study of the various sources of food articles consumed at home by questioning parents, merchants etc; by

consulting labels on the foods. The data may be compiled and interpreted by the group.

- (ii) A committee of pupils may undertake to find out in a rural area, how many families have members who work also in the city or town for a part of the time. In a city, it may be enquired how many people in the local community have come from rural areas and why they have come. With the teachers help, rough estimate of probable experience can be made.

b) Experience – Getting Activities

For selection of activities and giving firsthand knowledge to the students teacher may arrange some field trips of any area such as industrial or agricultural. But for arranging the visit of any area, the provision of the available local resources must be focused, otherwise school will never allow for having this experience. Overall focused must be laid on no cost field visits.

c) Presentation

A debate can be arranged on the topic “In the opinion of the house, mechanized agriculture is the only way of economic uplift in the Punjab. Maps showing the distribution of (1) agriculture crops, (2) major industries, (3) outstanding and localized cottage industries in the Punjab can be drawn. Charts showing (a) The classification of industries on the basis of nature of goods produced, (b) flow of raw materials, labour and power to few major industries can be made. Graphs showing the member of industrial laborers in the Punjab from 1947 to 2010 etc can be prepared.

Practical and productive work can help in the better understanding of almost every subject. In geography, it may take the form of drawing maps, making models, illustrations, organizing excursions, keeping weather records, constructing in appropriate materials scenes from the life of different region is of the world etc. In history, in addition to the preparation of suitable illustrations, they may prepare and stage historical plays making the costumes, the stage effects, fixing the lights etc, themselves or co-operatively study local history or set up a small history museum and in fact, take up any projects that will bring history to life, in connection with the study of languages – particularly the mother tongue – they may undertake to write small booklets on subjects of special interest to them. The collection of material from relevant sources, its writing, editing, the binding of the booklets attractively will all form parts of a joyous project. Illustrated charts about great writers may be prepared-containing their pictures, short notes on their lives and works and brief appropriate question in prose or poetry from their writings or they may possibly attempt translations of some easy books and articles in English with the object of providing rich reading material for their fellow students in the library. Taking in view these three types of activities, some of the activities are suggested as under:

1. Local survey and excursions.
2. Debates, discussions, dialogues and symposiums.
3. Hobbies
4. Dramatization
5. Clubs and societies

6. Projects
7. Competitions
8. Re-creational and cultural programmes
9. Social Service squads
10. Students-self Government
11. Camping
12. Writing of community books in games etc.

In modern education, creative activities are occupying a prominent place in the school programme. Creative experiences and social activities are breaking away from the other approaches and exploring the new avenues of learning. This emerging pattern for teaching requires that teachers play a more vital role. The creation of a stimulating atmosphere for the learner, both in the learning laboratory and in the community is essential for an experience approach to function. Education for children should be rich enough to meet all needs in a way that will contribute to society.

Examples of Classroom Activities

Furthermore, in the classroom, students work primarily in group and learning and knowledge are interactive and dynamic. There is a great focus and emphasis on social and communication skills, as well as collaboration and exchange of ideas. This is contrary to the traditional classroom in which students work primarily alone, learning is achieved through repetition, and the subjects are strictly adhered to and guided by a text book. Some activities encouraged in the classroom:

- **Experimentation:** Students individually perform an experiment and then come together as a class to discuss the results.
- **Research Project:** Students research a topic and can present their findings to the class.
- **Field Trips:** This allows students to put the concepts and ideas discussed in class in a real-world context.
- **Films:** These provide visual context and thus bring another sense into learning experience.
- **Classroom Discussions:** This technique is used in all of the methods described above. It is one of the most important distinctions of student centered teaching methods.

Activity method is more applicable in computer assisted teaching and online learning.

Role of Teacher

The teacher occupies very important position in the activity method. While it is really a sound practice that pupils should involve practically in different learning activities but, in all this accomplishment, the teacher has to play a vital role. The teacher has got mature experience, deeper and broader knowledge than the pupils. For this very reason, his guidance and prompting is not only desirable but also indispensable. The pupils are out on a venture; they need suggestions and guidance at every step. The teacher has to save the pupils from faltering and floundering. So the teacher has skilfully guided in the selection of activities. The teacher is supposed to give help when help is required. So, let

the teacher be a good prompter, just behind the curtain and not make his appearance on the stage itself, for stage is meant and reserved for the actors and actresses, the pupils.

The relations of the teacher to the pupils are to be much closer and informal than it is in an ordinary classroom teaching. He is there like a friend or elder brother with rich and mature experience. He is a director and not a dictator. His psychological knowledge must be thorough and scientific.

The teacher must be a keen observer and a true sympathizer. He should be able to win the good will of the pupils so that they would not feel discouraged. He should be a storehouse of information and knowledge so that he may anticipate the difficulties before-hand and suggest remedies as and when necessary. He should command respect of the pupils so that the pupils might look to him for help, guidance, support and affection. No method, however good, is ever superior to its teachers. So the need is for devoted educational leaders.

The teacher has still another role to play. He has to see that all the pupil's work co-operatively. The activity method is based on correlated teaching. This presupposes that the teacher should have knowledge of many subjects. He has to guide the selection and execution of the activities in such a way that the maximum number of subjects concerned is learnt by the pupils; gaps are properly filled. He should see that not only practical knowledge is to be imparted but complete and integrated knowledge is given. Experiences and contributions of the group should provide increased knowledge in the particular context.

Lastly, the teacher should be able to spare enough time for the success of this method. Only a devoted and enthusiastic teacher can make a success of this method, not the discouraged, time-serving, bell-watchers.

Overall in the activity based teaching learning classroom, the teacher's role is to prompt and facilitate students. Thus, the teacher's main focus should be on guiding students by asking questions that will lead them to develop their own conclusions on the subjects.

Benefits of Activity Based Learning Approach

- The learners are actively involved as the environment is democratic.
- The activities are interactive and student-centered.
- The teacher facilitates a process of learning in which students are encouraged to be responsible and autonomous.
- Children learn on their own pace.
- Provision of more time for self-directed learning and teacher directed learning is reduced considerably.
- Group learning, mutual learning and self learning are promoted.
- Teachers teaching time is judiciously distributed among children. Only needy children are addressed by teachers.
- Children participation in every step is ensured in the process of learning.
- Evaluation is inbuilt in the system it is done without the child knowing it.

- Role learning is discouraged and almost no scope for rote learning.
- Periodical absence of child from school is properly addressed.
- Classroom transaction is based on child's need and interests.
- Freedom to child in learning as he chooses his activity.
- Multigame and multilevel in learning is effectively addressed.
- No child can move to the next higher step of learning unless attains the previous one.
- Sense of event boosts child's confidence and morale.
- Attractive cards and activity create interest among children.
- Scope for child's development in creative and communicative skills.
- Children will have a feel of security as they sit in rounds in the groups.
- Children are allowed to move in the classroom as they choose their activity.
- Moreover the distance between teacher and the child is largely reduced and the teacher acts as a facilitator rather than teacher.

Limitations of Activity Method

- Careful consideration of emotionalized controls may be overlooked during classroom activities. Apparently some teachers forget that all classroom activities contribute directly or indirectly to the formation of attitudes, favorable or unfavorable.
- Some classroom activities become contradictory with values of and culture of the students.
- This method is time consuming and does not cover the course/subject matter timely.
- Our teachers are over burden. So they feel difficulty to plan relevant and appropriate activities all the time.
- Our classes are overcrowded so there is problem to arrange, organize and manage classroom activities properly.
- Lack of professional training of teachers affects to plan and process the innovative classroom activities such as computer based activities.
- Lack of physical, financial and instructional facilities become hurdles in the application of activity method.

Activity

Select a topic in mathematics which might be used for a unit in a grade in which you have special interest. Indicate suitable expressional activities to be included in the unit.

2. INDIVIDUAL PROJECT

The individual project is by far the most important single piece of work in activity method. It provides the opportunity for individual or student to demonstrate independence and originality, to plan and organize a project for prescribed period, and to put in to practice some of the techniques to be taught. During individual project student can show his/her individuality and inspiration in this project. Overall an individual project is an economically indivisible series of works fulfilling a precise technical function and with clearly identifiable aims. An individual project may include one or more sub-projects. An individual project generally addresses a single activity or issue of economic, environmental or social need within any one of the priority sectors of any programme.

Steps Involved in Individual Project

Following steps are focused during individual project:

1. Project Outline
2. Preliminary Assessment
3. Application / Implementation
4. Appraisal
5. Decision

1. Project Outline

Keeping in view the purpose of given task or activity student will prepare project outline. This outline comprises on propose targets, resources, methodology and time schedule.

2. Preliminary Assessment

Before execution of project student will assess the requirements of task or activity which are prerequisite, for it. For example to analyze the physical, human and financial resources which are required for the fulfillment of given task.

3. Application/Implementation

On this stage project will be implemented or executed practically for the accomplishment of given task or assigned activity.

4. Appraisal

At this stage student will organize the appraisal of project through which it will be analyzed to what extent given task or assigned activity has been achieved.

5. Decision

Finally the success or failure of the task or activity will be determined.

In all steps teacher's role will be a guide and facilitator to assist the student regarding the accomplishment of project.

3. GROUP PROJECTS

Learning and working in groups involves shared and learned values, resources and ways of doing things. Effective groups learn to succeed by combining these factors. Your group, and each individual within it will only be as effective as they are willing to respect differences within the group. The aim of group work is to produce better (more effective, more detailed, more comprehensive) presentations reports. This achieved through the combined talents of group members, contributing knowledge and ideas.

One difficulty with group work is that you can't work as quickly as you can by yourself. Patience, communication skills and commitment are all required to make the most of the contributions of all group members. Thus effective group work requires each member to focus on the process rather than just the product.

Why Group Project?

Few of us act alone in the real world. Most things are done with the help or ideas of other people. Group projects are great practice for high school, college, and real life, when you will probably have a job that requires working with others. Right now, group projects can be fun and they often allow you to do a bigger, more interesting project than you could alone. With group work, you can actually learn more in less time.

Group projects also give you a chance to get to know kids you might not otherwise know or talk with. Group projects are also a way to practice skills you're not so sure of. For example: working on a deadline, staying organized, or being patient. And if you're a little nervous talking in front of a group, a joint project can help you become more comfortable with it.

Getting Started

One of the most important things about group work is talking and meeting together. It's a good idea to continually check with everybody on their progress and to see if anyone needs help. Here are some other tips for making group work really work.

You might think the first step is figuring out who will do what, but actually it's getting to know one another a little. Take a few minutes to chat. Even if you know each other well, it can help to take a minute to think about your skills and share your strengths and weaknesses. For instance, you might say, "I 'am a good artist, if you want me to make the poster. "Or, "I 'am not the greatest artist, but I 'would like to get better at it – would anyone like to be my partner on the poster?"

The second step is to go over ground rules from your teacher and any that you want to create together as a group (for example, how the group will help people who are behind on their work). Will all of your meetings be in class? Do you need to plan time to work together outside of school?

Focusing on Fairness

Figuring out individual jobs within the group is a really important part of the process. One of the most common pitfalls of group work is that someone may end up doing all the work if the rest of the team can't quite get it together.

From the beginning, it's important to divide the work fairly and evenly. If you feel like you or another kid is doing too much, gently bring it up with the group. If nothing changes, you might want to talk with your teacher.

Holding Good Meetings

One key to a good meeting is having a leader, who should help the group to stay focused. It doesn't have to be the same person.

Group Projects for School

In fact, it's better if it's not. It's a good idea to talk about how the work is going, and if anyone needs help. What if you're not the leader? Important roles to play during a meeting include:

- The starter makes suggestions and offers ideas.
- The asker asks members to share information or ideas on a topic.
- The peacemaker looks at opposing views and finds something useful in each of them, helping people work out differences.

And try not to play any of these negative roles:

- The non-participant does not contribute and/or discourages the others.
- "Captain Critical" responds to other people's ideas with criticism.
- The dominator interrupts and talks more than listens.
- The clown distracts the group and keeps it from focusing on the work.

More on Group Projects

- **Interaction with the Group** is based upon mutual respect and encouragement.
- Often creativity is vague
Ideas are important to the success of the project, not personalities.
A group's strength lies in its ability to develop ideas individuals bring.
- **Conflict can be an extension of Creativity**
The group should be aware of this eventuality. Resolution on conflict balances the end goals with mutual respect. In other a group project is a cooperative, rather than a competitive, learning experience.

The two major objectives of a group project are:

- What is learned: factual material as well as the process
- What is produced: written paper, presentation, and/or media project

Role of instructors/teachers/professors:

- Out comes depend on the clarity of the objective (s) given by teachers.

- The group's challenge is to interpret these objectives, and then determine how to meet them.
- Group work is only as effective as teachers or instructors manage and guide the process.
- Group projects promote the cooperative and collaborative attitude among the students.
- Students must be aware of, and should be prepared for this group process.
- Cooperative group projects should be structured so that no individual can coast on the efforts of his/her team-mates.

Scoring:

- Rewards ideally should be intrinsic to the process, with group members deriving their reward from their contributions to the group and project.
- External reinforcement (Grades, etc) for individuals can be based upon improvement, as opposed to comparative, scoring. Traditional, comparative scoring works to the detriment of teams with low-achieving members. Evaluation based upon improvement rewards the group for an individual's progress. Peer, comparative evaluations can have a negative effect on teams: low scoring members are considered "undesirable" and drag upon performance.

High achievers versus low achievers

We assume high achievers mentor or teach low achievers.

In the process of teaching others, we can learn more about the topic.

As we tutor, even simple questions from the tutee make us look at our subject matter freshly. As we explain, we gain a deeper understanding of the topic. Low achievers then tutor or teach high achievers!

- High achievers profit in cooperative learning in other ways:
Leadership skills, self-esteem gains, conflict resolution skills, and role-talking abilities which become part of the learning process, and betterment of the student.

4. RESEARCH PROJECTS

Generally, a research is a quest for knowledge through experimentation, investigation and thorough search. It is aimed at discovery and interpretation of new knowledge or at resolving debatable existing knowledge. There are systematic procedures and methods for explorations, targeted at obtaining new knowledge. The starting point of a research is to think of a good idea. Your research is good as your idea.

Before starting any long term or complicated task, it is wise that we make a rough plan or a map which will guide us throughout the course of the job. In the same way, before the commencement of our research, we need to devote time and think logically on the area of our research and how we are going to about it.

Typically, a research project revolves around following three questions.

- (i) What do you plan to accomplish?
- (ii) Why do you want to do it?
- (iii) How are you going to do it?

Types & kinds of research projects

Research projects can be broadly categorized into the following types:

a) Academic Research Projects

- Social research project
- Scientific research project

b) Commercial Research Projects

- Sales Project
- Grant Project
- Business Project
- Funding Project
- Marketing Research Project

c) Basic Steps in the research process

Selection of the problem

A researcher may be concerned with conditions or relationships that exists, practices that prevail , beliefs, points of view or attitudes that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are being felt or trends that are developing, and may select the problem accordingly from the area or field in which he is interested.

Statement of the problem

The researcher must state the problem clearly as it is done in case of other types of research. The statement must identify the variables involved in the study. It should specify clearly whether the study is merely seeking to determine the present status of these variables or whether it will also explore relationships between the variables.

Identification of data

After stating and defining the problem, the next step for the researcher is to list the data to be collected for the study. He has to specify whether the data are of qualitative or a quantitative nature and whether the data will be collected in the form of counts, test scores, responses to questionnaires, interviews, and so on.

Selection or Development of Tools

The nature of the data to be collected helps the researcher to select the appropriate tools for the study. If the readymade tools are not available, the researcher has to develop his own tools. Questionnaires, interviews, psychological tests, rating scales, schedules and attitudes scales are the most frequently used tools for descriptive research. If the researcher uses readymade tools, he should satisfy himself about their reliability, validity, and suitability for sample chosen for the study. If the researcher develops his own tools, he should try them out with a small group in order to evaluate them and make modifications if necessary.

Selection of the Sample

The researcher must select the sample about which he wishes to seek information using appropriate sampling techniques. The sample selected should adequately represent the population.

Collection of Data

The researcher should specify the practical schedule for gathering the data from the sample selected for the study with the help of appropriate tools.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data collected is quantified in the form of counts, test scores, responses the questionnaires, etc. These are analyzed and interpreted with the help of appropriate parametric or non-parametric statistical tests.

Writing of the Research Report

It is the last stage in the research and the researcher should exercise extreme caution in generalizing conclusions and reporting them with all the limitations of the study. For writing the research report university approved format will be focused which is followed by APA style.

5. ACTIVITY/EXERCISE

Discuss with IV grade teachers about the problems faced by them during the teaching. And design a outline for research project on one of the most common problem of primary school teachers.

6. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What is an activity? Discuss the importance of activity method. Name the different types of activities you would use in English.
2. List some of social activities and illustrate their importance for promoting the social skills among students.
3. Why should both individual and group projects be considered by a teacher? Illustrative the function and importance of each.
4. Summarize the main points bearing on the role of research project. What does your answer suggest regarding the problems faced by researchers in Pakistan?
5. Elaborate the teacher role in activity method. Also highlight the problems faced by our teacher for using activity method in classroom.

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